

OUR LORD BEFORE HEROD NO. 1645

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19, 1882,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

"And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing."

Luke 23:8. 9.

AFTER Pilate had declared to the chief priests and scribes that he found no fault at all in Jesus, they were afraid that their victim would escape, and therefore their fury was raised to the highest pitch, and they cried out the more vehemently against Him. In the course of their outcries they made use of the word, "Galilee," going, as it seems to me, a little out of their way in order to drag in the name, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." Galilee was a region held in very great contempt, and they mentioned it to cast a slur upon our Lord, as if He were a mere boor from among the clowns of Galilee. To Pilate they thought that the mention of the name would, perhaps, act like the proverbial red rag held before an infuriated bull, for he appears to have been troubled by seditious persons from that province. We all remember that they were Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. The Galileans were reputed to be an ignorant people, apt to be led astray by impostors, and so enthusiastic that they ventured their lives against the Romans. The priests would not only cast contempt upon Jesus, whom they were known to call the Galilean, but also excite the prejudices of Pilate, so that he might condemn Him to die as one of a nest of rebels.

They were mistaken, however, in the consequences of their device, for Pilate caught at the word, "Galilee," directly. That province was not immediately under his rule, it was under the sway of the tetrarch Herod Antipas, and therefore he thought within himself, "I can kill two birds with one stone, I can get rid of this troublesome business by sending this prisoner to Herod, and I can also greatly gratify the king by showing him this attention." Pilate had quarreled with Herod, and now for some purpose of his own he resolved to patch up a friendship by pretending great deference to his sovereign powers by sending one of his subjects to be tried by him. Pilate, therefore, asked, "Is this man a Galilean?" and when they told him that He was—for He was so by repute, His birth at Bethlehem having been willfully ignored—then Pilate at once commanded that He be led to Herod, for Herod was in his palace at Jerusalem attending the Passover festival.

See, then, my brethren, our divine Master conducted in His third march of sorrow through Jerusalem. First, He was led from the garden to the house of Annas, then He was conducted through the streets from the hall of Caiaphas to the judgment hall of Pilate, and now by Pilate's orders He is led a third time by the angry crowd of priests through the streets to the palace of Herod, there to await His fourth examination. Certain of the old writers delight to remark that as there were four evangelists to do honor to our Lord, so were there four judges to do Him shame, Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod. We are on safer ground when we observe with the early church the coalition of the heathen and the Jews, "For of a truth against Your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done."

This morning I shall endeavor to set forth this portion of the sad narrative under two heads, which will be these, *Herod before Jesus*, and *Jesus before Herod*.

I. I call your attention first to HEROD BEFORE JESUS, because you must know something of his character, something of the meaning of his questions, before you can rightly understand the sorrow which they caused Jesus our Lord and Master.

This Herod Antipas was the son of the old Herod the Great, who had put to death the babes at Bethlehem in the hope of destroying the King of the Jews. He was a chip off the old block, but still he was several degrees baser than his father. There was nothing of the grandeur of his father about him. There was the same evil disposition without the courage and the decision. He did not in some things out-Herod Herod, for in certain points he was a more despicable person. Herod the Great may be called a lion, but our Lord very descriptively called this lesser Herod a fox, saying, "Go and tell this fox." He was a man of dissolute habits and frivolous mind. He was very much under the sway of a wicked woman, who destroyed any little good there might have been in him. He was a lover of pleasure, a lover of himself, depraved, weak, and trifling to the last degree. I almost object to call him a man, therefore let him only be called a tetrarch.

This petty tetrarch had once been the subject of religious impressions. These Herods all more or less felt the influence of religion at times, though they were by no means benefited thereby. The impressions made upon his conscience by John did not last with Herod. They were at first powerful and practical, for we are informed that, "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and holy, and observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." I suppose he reformed many matters in his kingdom, and cast off perhaps some of his grosser vices. But when at last John began to denounce him for having taken his brother's wife to be his paramour, while yet the brother lived, he cast his reprobate into prison. And then you remember how, with reluctance, Herod, to please his mistress, beheaded John in prison. Mark this, probably there is no more dangerous character living than a man who has once come under religious influences so as to be materially affected by them, and yet has broken loose and cast off all fear of God. He has done despite to his conscience so violently that from now on he will know few qualms. In such a man is fulfilled the saying of our Lord, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest and finds none. Then he says, I will return into my house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept and garnished. Then goes he, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The mind of Herod Antipas was in the condition of the chamber which has been swept and garnished, for his life had been somewhat reformed, but the unclean spirit with the terrible seven had come back to his old den and now he was a worse man by a great deal than he had ever been before. The dog returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. This Herod was an Idumaean, that is to say, one of the descendants of Esau, an Edomite, and though he had professedly become a Jew, yet the old blood was in him, as it is written concerning Edom, "He did pursue his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity." The true Jacob stood before one of the seed of Esau, a tetrarch, profane and worldly like his ancestor, and scant was the pity which He received. Esau was descended from Abraham according to the flesh, but with Jacob was the covenant according to the spirit. It bodes no good to the spiritual seed when it comes, even for a moment, under the power of the carnal seed. We see how the child of the flesh takes to mocking, while the child according to promise is called to patience.

Herod was in such a state of mind that he furnishes me with a typical character which I would use for the instruction and admonition of you all. He is a type of some who frequently come to this Tabernacle, and go to other places of worship occasionally—people who were once under religious impressions, and cannot forget that they were so, but who will never be under any religious impressions again. They are now hardened into vain curiosity. They wish to know about everything that is going on in the church and kingdom of Christ, but they are far enough from caring to become part and parcel of it themselves. They are possessed with an idle curiosity which would lift the golden lid of the ark, and intrude behind the veil. They like to gather together all the absurd stories which are told about ministers, and to recount all the odd remarks that were ever made by preachers for centuries. All the gossip of the churches is sure to be known to them, for they eat up the sins of God's people as they eat bread. It is not likely that their knowledge of religious things will be of any use to them, but they are always eager after it. The church of God is their lounge, divine service is their theater, ministers are to them as actors, and the gospel itself, so much play-house property. They are a sort of religious Athenians, spending their time in nothing else than in hearing some new thing, hoping that perhaps some singular and unexpected discourse may be delivered in their hearing which they can recount in the next company where they would

raise a laugh. To them preaching is all a farce, and worked up with a few falsehoods of their own, it makes excellent fun for them, and causes them to be regarded as amusing fellows. Let them look at Herod, and see in him their leader, the type of what they really are or may soon become.

First, let us see *idle curiosity at its best*. Look here, sirs, and then look in a glass and trace the likeness.

To begin with, we find that Herod's curiosity had been created in him by his having heard many things concerning Jesus. How did he come to hear of Him? His great deeds were common talk; all Jerusalem rang with the news of His miracles and wondrous words. Herod, a convert to the Jewish faith, such as he was, took interest in anything that was going on among the Jews, and all the more so if it touched upon the kingdom, for the jealousy which set his father in a rage was not altogether absent in his son. No doubt also he had heard of Christ from John. John would not long have preached to Herod without using his own grand text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." I am sure that, though he was a preacher of righteousness, he had not left off being the herald of the coming Savior, and so from the stern lips of the great Baptist, Herod had heard concerning the King of the Jews, and something concerning His kingdom. When John was dead Herod heard still more of Christ, so that astonished with what was being done, he said, "This is John the Baptist whom I have beheaded: he is risen from the dead." Jesus became a kind of nightmare to his conscience. He was disturbed and alarmed by what he heard that the prophet of Nazareth was doing. Besides that, there was one in his household who doubtless knew a great deal about the Savior, for in Herod's court was the husband of a woman who ministered unto the Lord of her substance. The lady's name was Joanna, and her husband was Chuza, Herod's steward—I suppose Herod's butler and manager of his household. From Chuza he could readily have learned concerning Jesus, and we may be sure that he would inquire, for the fear of the great prophet was upon him. Thus Herod's curiosity had been excited about our Lord Jesus Christ for a considerable time, and he longed to see Him. I am not sorry when this happens to any of my hearers. I am right glad that they should hear something about the Lord from His friends, something about Him from His ministers, and from those of us whose highest glory it is that, though we are not worthy to unloose the laces of His shoes, yet it is all our business here below to cry, "Behold the Lamb!" So these rumors, this talk, these admonitions, had begotten in Herod's mind the desire that his eyes should light on Jesus, so far, so good. Often men at this day come up to the house of prayer that they may hear the preacher, not because they want to be converted, not because they have any idea of ever becoming followers of Jesus, but because they have heard something about true religion which excites their curiosity, and they want to know what it is all about. They are fond of curiosities of literature, and so they would study curiosities of religion, oddities of oratory, and things remarkable of a theological kind.

It is said of Herod, in consequence of this curiosity that he rejoiced to see Jesus. It is said that he was, "exceedingly glad." What a hopeful state to be in! May we not expect great things when a man sees Jesus and is exceedingly glad? As I read this passage to myself, I thought, why, the language might well describe a child of God. Our text might fitly be spoken concerning ourselves. Let me read it line by line, and remark upon it. "When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad." So were the apostles when Jesus manifested Himself to them, for it is written, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." What other sight could bring to a true believer such joy? "For he was desirous to see Him." Are we not? Are not all His people longing for that blessed vision which will make their heaven throughout eternity? "For he was desirous to see Him for a long season." This is also true of us, our hearts are weary with watching, and our eyes fail for the sight of His face. "Why does He tarry?" we cry. "Make haste, my beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." "Because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him." This, also, is our hope; we would both see and feel some gracious miracle, upon our eyes, that they may be opened, or upon our hands, that we may have greater power in the Master's work, or upon our feet, that we may run in the ways of obedience. And especially upon our hearts, that we may be always soft and tender, pure and gracious, to feel the mind of God. Yes, these words read very prettily, indeed, but yet, you see, the meaning was not the high and spiritual one which we could put into them, but the low and groveling one, which was all that Herod could reach. He was "exceedingly glad," but it was a frivolous gladness, because he hoped that now his curiosity would be satisfied. He had Jesus in his power, and he hoped

now to hear some of the oratory of the prophet of whom men said, "Never man spoke like this man." He hoped to see Him work a miracle, even He, of whom the record was, "He has done all things well." Could not the great prophet be induced to multiply loaves and fishes? Might he not persuade Him to heal a blind beggar, or make a lame man leap as a hart? Would not a miracle make rare mirth in Herod's palace, and cause a new sensation in the mind of the worn-out debauchee? If, for instance, a corpse were dug up, and Jesus would restore it to life, it would be something to tell when next the king sat down to a drinking bout with Herodias and her like. When each was trying to exceed the other in telling strange tales, Herod would top them all! In this style many people come to hear the gospel. They want to have an anecdote of their own about a notorious preacher, and if they do see something ludicrous, or hear something striking, they will invent a tale, and swear that they heard it and saw it, though the lie might well choke them. They act thus because they come to hear for nothing but to feed their hungry curiosity. None carry this to such an extreme as those who did at one time feel a measure of the power of the word of God, but have shaken it off. These are the mockers whose bands are made strong. These are the idlers who turn even the testimony of the Lord into food for mirth. Still, at the first blush, there is something that looks very hopeful about them, and we are pleased that they exhibit such gladness when Christ is set forth before them.

One ill sign about Herod was the fact that his conscience had gone to sleep after having for a while troubled him. For a little while he had been afraid of Jesus, and trembled lest John had risen from the dead, but that fear had subsided, and superstition had given way before his Sadducean skepticism. He hoped that Jesus would perform some wonderful thing in his presence, but he had lost all dread of the Just and Holy One. He was a man of vain mind, the man whom he feared one day, he murdered the next, and He whom he welcomed with gladness he hurried off with derision. There was left to Herod no feeling towards Jesus but the craving after something new, the desire to be astonished, the wish to be amused. I think I see him now, sitting on his throne, expectant of wonders, like the trifler that he was. "Now we shall see," he says, "now we shall see what we shall see! Perhaps He will deliver Himself by sheer force, if He walked the sea He will probably fly away in the air. Perhaps He will render Himself invisible, and so pass away through the midst of the chief priests. I have heard that many a time when they would have stoned Him or cast Him down from the brow of a hill, He departed, gliding through their midst, perhaps He will do the same this morning." There sits the cunning prince, thinking what the wonder will be, regarding even displays of divine power as mere showman's tricks, or magician's illusions.

When Jesus was set before Him, he began to ask Him questions. "Then he questioned Him in many words." I am glad the questions are not recorded. They could have done us no good, and besides, our modern Herods nowadays are great masters of the art, and need not that any man teaches them. We need not to be furnished with the old-fashioned quibbles and questions, for the supply is quite equal to our requirements. Fools can ask more questions in ten minutes than wise men are able to answer in fifty years. I say we do not need the old questions, but I daresay they would run somewhat in this line, "Are You that King of the Jews whom my father strove to slay? How came You to be a Nazarene? Have You been a miracle worker, or is it all slight of hand and black magic? John told me something about You, did You deceive him, or is it true? Have you raised the dead? Can you heal the sick?" Trying all the while to excite Him to work a miracle, he raised doubts and chopped logic fluently, for the text suggestively mentions his, "many words." The curious in religion are generally very apt at asking questions, not that they want Christ, not that they want heaven, not that they want pardon of sin, not that they want any good thing, but still they would like to know everything that is dark and mysterious in theology. They would like to have a list of the difficulties of belief, a catalog of the curiosities of spiritual experience. Some men collect ferns, others are learned upon beetles, but these persons pry into church life, its doctrines, pursuits, aims, and infirmities—especially the latter. They could write a book upon orthodox England and unorthodox England, and dwell with unction upon mental peculiarities. It furnishes them with something new, and adds to their store of information, and so they spare no prying questions, for they would analyze manna from heaven, and distil the tears of Christ, nothing is sacred to them, they put Scripture on the rack, and quibble at the words of the Holy Spirit.

I have thus set forth idle curiosity in its better stage. Now let us pass on and see how Jesus treated this curiosity, considering it under the head of IDLE CURIOSITY DISAPPOINTED. "He questioned Him in many words, but He answered him nothing!" If Herod had wanted to believe, Jesus would have been ready enough to instruct, if Herod had possessed a broken heart, Jesus would have hastened with tender words to bind it up, if Herod had been a candid inquirer if his doubts had been sincere and true, the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, would have been delighted to speak with him. But Jesus knew that Herod would not believe in Him and would not take up his cross and follow Him, and therefore He would not waste words on a heartless, soulless degenerate. Had He not said to His own disciples, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine"? He saw in this man one so mean, cunning, cowardly, and heartless, that He viewed him as a fox to be let alone rather than a lost sheep to be sought after. He was a tree twice dead, and plucked up by the roots. All the Master did was to maintain an absolute silence in his presence, and let him question as he might, "He answered him nothing."

Observe, my brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world to be a performer. He did not leave His glory to earn the approval of men. And as Herod regarded Him as a mere wonderworker, and would have turned his court into a theater where Jesus would be the chief actor, our Lord very wisely held His peace and did nothing at all. And sometimes His ministers might be wise if they were silent too. If they know that men have no desire to learn, no spiritual wish or aspiration, I say they might be wise if they held their tongue altogether. I have sometimes admired George Fox, who, on one occasion, when the crowd had gathered round him, expecting him to deliver some fiery address, stood still by the space of two hours while they clamored that he should speak. Never a word did they get from him. He said he would famish them of words, for words were all they wanted, and not the power of the Spirit. Probably they remembered his silence better than they would have remembered his most vehement discourse. Sometimes silence is all that men deserve, and the only thing which in any probability will impress them. As the Lord Jesus was no performer, He did not gratify Herod, but answered him not a word.

Moreover, be it remembered that Herod had already silenced the Voice, and no marvel that he could not hear the Word. For what was John? He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." What was Jesus but the Word? He that silences the Voice may well be denied the Word. Had not his shallow soul been moved—I was about to say, to its depths, such depths as they were? Had he not been admonished by one of the greatest of the children of men? For among them that were born of women, there had not then been a greater, than John the Baptist. Had not a burning and shining light shone right into his very eyes? And if he refused to hear the greatest of the sons of men, and to see the brightest light that God had then kindled, it was but right that the Savior should refuse him even a ray of light, and let him perish in the darkness which he had himself created. Ah, sirs, you cannot trifle with religious impressions with impunity. God thinks it no trifle. He, who has once been moved in his soul and has put away the heavenly word from him, may fear that it will be said of him, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." May not some conscience here, if it has but a little life in it, be alarmed at the memory of former rejections of the gospel, frequent quenching of the Spirit, and repeated trampling upon the blood of Jesus? If God never speaks to you again in the way of mercy, you have no right to expect that He should do so. And if from this day to the Day of Judgment the Lord should never give you another word of mercy, who shall say that you have been treated harshly? Have you not deserved it at His hands as Herod had done?

Furthermore, remember that Herod might have heard Christ hundreds of times before if he had chosen to do so. Jesus was always to be found by those who desired to listen to Him. He did not go sneaking about Galilee, or holding secret conventicles in holes and corners. He always spoke in the synagogue, and Herod might have gone there. He spoke in the street or by the seashore, or on the mountain side and Herod might have gone there. Jesus stood out boldly before the people, and His teaching was public and free, if Herod had wished to hear Him, he might have done so times beyond number. Therefore now, having despised all these opportunities, the Savior will not furnish Him with another, which he would have treated in the same manner. He answers him nothing, and by so doing answered him terribly. Beware how you use opportunities. Dear hearers, beware how you waste your Sabbaths. There may come a

day when you would give a thousand worlds for another Sabbath, but it shall be denied you. There may come a day when you would count out all your wealth to have another invitation to Christ, but it will be denied you, for you must die, and the voice of mercy will never ring in your ears again. They, that will not when they may, shall not when they would. Many will knock after the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, but when He shuts no man opens. The door was shut on Herod.

Observe that our Master had good reason for refusing to speak to Herod this time, over and above what I have mentioned, because He would not have it supposed that He yielded to the pomp and dignity of men. Jesus never refused an answer to the question of a beggar, but He would not gratify the curiosity of a king. Herod dreams that he has a right to ask whatever impudent questions he may choose to invent, but Jesus knows nothing of men's rights in such a matter, it is all grace with Him, and to Him the prince upon the throne is not an atom better than the peasant in the cottage. And so when Herod in all his pride and glory thinks full sure that Christ will pay deference to him, and perhaps will pay him court to win his favor, Jesus disregards him. He wants nothing of the murderer of John the Baptist. Had Herod been the poorest and most loathsome leper throughout all Judea, had he been the poorest beggar in the street, who was lame or blind, his voice would at once been heard by the Lord of mercy. But He will not answer the prince who hopes for homage at His hands, nor feed the idle wishes of a crafty reprobate. What favor did He need at Herod's hand? He had not come to be set free, He had come to die, and therefore His face is set like a flint, and with heroic courage, He answers him not a word.

Now, then, you have seen frivolous curiosity at its best, and you have seen it disappointed, as it generally is to this day. If people come to hear the gospel out of this frivolous curiosity, they usually retire saying, "Really, I do not see anything in it. We have heard nothing eloquent, nothing profound, and nothing outrageous." Just so, there is nothing in the gospel to please the luxurious, though everything to bless the poor. Jesus answered Herod nothing, and He will answer you nothing if you are of Herod's order. It is the doom of triflers that they should get no answer from the gospel. Neither the Scriptures, nor the ministry, nor the Spirit of God, nor the Lord Jesus will speak with them.

What was the result of this disappointment upon Herod? *Idle curiosity curdles into derision.* He thinks Jesus is a fool, if not an idiot, and he says so, and begins to deride Him. With his men of war he mocks Him, and "set Him at naught," which signifies to make nothing of Him. He calls his soldiers and says, "Look at this creature; He will not answer a word to what I have to say, is He bereft of His senses? Wake Him up and see." Then they mock and laugh and jest and jeer. "Here," says Herod, "He calls Himself a King! Bring out one of my shining white robes and put it on Him, we will make a king of Him." So they put it about His blessed person, and again heap insults upon Him. Was it not strange—this decking Him in a gorgeous robe of dazzling white? The mediaeval writers delight to dwell on the fact that Herod arrayed our Lord in white and afterwards Pilate clothed Him in red. Is He not the Lily of the valley and the Rose of Sharon? Is He not matchlessly white for innocence, and then gloriously red in His atoning blood? Thus, in their very mockery, they are unconsciously setting forth to us both His spotless holiness and His majestic royalty. When they had insulted to their full, they sent Him back to Pilate, kicking Him from foot to foot at their pleasure, as if He were a football for their sport. Then our Lord made His fourth sorrowful march through the streets of the city over which He had wept.

That is what idlers in the long run do with Christ, in their disappointment they grow weary of Him and His gospel, and they cry, "Put Him away; there is nothing in Him, nothing of what we looked for, nothing to satisfy curiosity, nothing sensational; take Him away." Away goes Jesus, never to return, and that is the end of Herod, and the end of a great many more.

II. My time is nearly gone, but bear with me while for a few minutes I try to set forth JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD. Although no blows are recorded, I greatly question whether our divine Master suffered anywhere more than He did in the palace of Herod. You and I, perhaps, apprehend most easily the woe of the coarser sufferings when they scourged Him and when they plaited the crown of thorns and put it upon His head. But the delicate and sensitive mind of our Master was, perhaps, more touched by what He suffered in the palace of Herod than by the rougher torture. For, first, here is a man fully in earnest for the salvation of our souls, and in the midst of His grievous passion He is looked upon as a charlatan and a mere performer who is expected to work a miracle for the amusement of an impious court. How it cuts an earnest man to the quick, when he finds that, let him do what he may, people do

not sympathize with him in earnestness, but are coolly criticizing his style, or imitating his mannerisms, or admiring his expressions as matters of literary taste. It is heart-breaking when your ardor makes you self-forgetful to find others pecking at trifles, or making your efforts into a kind of show. The Christ must have been wounded in His very soul when He was treated as a mere performer, as if He had left the Father's bosom and was about to give Himself to death, and yet was aiming to amuse or to astonish. I know how it saddens my Lord's servants when they preach their very hearts out to bring men to repentance, and the only result is to elicit the remark that, "His arguments were very telling, and that pathetic passage was very fine." There is a thorn in such chill words to pierce deeper than the crown of thorns. Horrible indifference smites like the Roman scourge.

Then to think of our Lord's being questioned by such a fop as Herod! A man of earnest and intense soul, living for one thing only, and that the redemption of mankind, is here worried by the foolish questions of a man of the world. Were you ever in an agony of bodily pain yourself, and did some frivolous person call upon you and begin to torture you with the most wicked nonsense and absurdities? Have you not felt that his chatter was worse than the pain? It must have been so with Jesus. When the ridiculous must question the sublime the result is misery. With the bloody sweat yet damp upon His brow, and with the accursed spit still defacing His blessed countenance, the Man of Sorrows must be tortured by the driveling of a heartless idler. With His heart all bowed down under a sense of the awful penalty of sin, the great Substitute for sinners must be molested by the petty small talk and vulgar jests of the meanest of mankind. Solving eternal problems, and building up an everlasting temple unto the living God, He must be twitted by a vainglorious tetrarch, tormented and tortured by foolish questions fit only to be asked of a charlatan. We think the cross itself was not a worse instrument of torture than the haughty tongue of this debauched monarch.

Then the vulgarity of the whole thing must have tortured our Lord. The whole of them gathered round about Him with their hoarse laughter and coarse jests. He has become a byword and a proverb to them. When you are merry you can enjoy merriment, but when the heart is sad laughter is wretchedly discordant, and embitters your grief. Now this one laughs, and then another sneers, while a third thrusts out the tongue, and they are all uproariously jovial. In harmony they are all making nothing of Him, though with awful earnestness He is lifting the world out of the slough of despair, and hanging it in its place, again among the stars of glory. Jesus was performing more than Herculean labors, and these little beings, like so many gnats and flies, were stinging Him. Small things are great at torturing, and these worthless beings did their utmost to torment our Lord. Oh, the torture of the Master's spirit!

Remember, it was no small sorrow to our Lord to be silent. You tell me that He appears majestic in His silence. It is so, but the pain of it was acute. Can you speak well? Do you love to speak for the good of your fellow men, and do you know that when you speak, full often your words are spirit and life to those who hear you? It will be very hard to feel compelled to refuse them a good word. Do not imagine that the Lord despised Herod as Herod despised the Lord. Ah, no! The pity of His soul went out to this poor frivolous creature, which must make sport of the Savior's sufferings, and treat the Son of the Highest as though He were a court fool who must play before him. The Savior's infinite love was breaking His heart, for He longed to bless His persecutor, and yet He must not speak, nor give forth a warning word. True, there was little need for words, for His very presence was a sermon which ought to have melted a heart of stone, but yet it cost the Savior a mighty effort to keep down the floodgates and hold in the blessed torrents of His holy speech, which would have flowed out in compassionate pleading. Silent He must be, but the anguish of it I can scarcely tell. Sometimes to be permitted to speak a word is the greatest comfort you can have. Have you ever been in such a state that if you could cry out, it would have been a relief to you? What anguish, then, to be forced to be as a mute man! What woe to be forced to be silent with all these mockers about Him, and yet pitying them all! As a man might pity a moth that flies into the flame of the candle, and will not be delivered, so did our Lord, pity these creatures. How sad that they could make sport of their own damnation, fling the salvation of God to the ground, and tread it down as swine tread down their husks. Oh, it grieved the Master's heart; it moved His soul to its very center.

Think of the utter contempt that was poured upon Him. I do not judge that this was the bitterest of His woes, for their contempt was an honor to Him. But it was one ingredient of His cup of mingled

wormwood and gall, that they should so despise Him as to clothe Him in a white robe, and mock His kingship, when on that kingship their only hope was hung. They “set Him at naught,” that is, put Him down as nothing, jeered and jested at Him, and if there was nothing even about His manhood which they could respect, they invented ways by which they could pour scorn upon Him. Luke is the gospel of the man, if you want to read about Jesus in His manhood, read Luke, and there you will see how His very manhood was trampled in the mire by these inhuman creatures, who found their joy in despising Him.

See, then, your Lord and Master, and let me put two or three questions to you. Do you not think that this peculiar silence of Jesus was a part of His anguish, in which He was bearing the punishment for your sins of the tongue? Ah me, ah me! Redeemed of the Lord, how often have you misused your speech by wanton words! How often have we uttered murmuring words, proud words, false words, words of despite to holy things, and now our sins of the tongue are all coming upon Him, and He must stand silent and bear our penalty.

And is it not possible that when they put the gorgeous robe upon Him, He was bearing your sins of vanity, your sins of dress and pride, when you made yourselves glorious to behold, and arrayed yourselves in gorgeous robes and glittering apparel? Know you not that these things are your shame? For had you had no sin, you would have needed none of these poor rags, and may not the Christ in white and red be bearing your sins of folly? And do you not think that when they were making Him nothing, and despising Him, He was then bearing our sins, when we set Him at naught—our words of despite and derision, when, perhaps, in our ungodly days we, too, made sport of holy things, and jested at the word of God? Ah me, I think it was so, and I ask you to look at Him, and say as you see Him there, “It is not Herod after all, it is my tongue, my vanity, my trifling with holy things, which caused Him this exquisite torture. Lord Jesus, substitute for me, let all these transgressions of mine be put away once and for all by Your meritorious passion.”

Finally, we read that Herod and Pilate were made friends from that day, and I do hope if there are any here that are true-hearted Christians, if they have had any ill-will towards one another, they will think it a great shame that Herod and Pilate should be friends, and that any two followers of Jesus should not be friends at the sight of the suffering Master. As for those two foxes, Pilate and Herod, they were tied tail to tail that day by our great Samson. Our Lord has often been a point of union for wicked men, not by His intent and purpose, but because they have joined together to oppose Him. I have often smiled in my heart to see how superstition and skepticism will march together when they are anxious to oppose the gospel. Then the Sadducee says, “Give me your hand, dear Pharisee. We have a common interest here, for this man would overturn us all.” The gospel is the mortal enemy both of the skeptical Sadducee and the superstitious Pharisee, and so they lay aside their differences to assail it. Now, then, if the wicked unite before our Lord Jesus when He wears the white robe, should not His people much more be united, especially when they remember that He said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.” I charge you by your homage to Him you call Master and Lord, if you have any difference of any sort with any Christian brother or sister, let not yon sun go down till you have ended it by hearty love for Jesus’ sake. Let it be seen that Christ is the great uniter of all those who are in Him. He would have us love one another even as He has loved us, and His prayer is that we may be one. May the Lord hear that prayer and make us one in Christ Jesus. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 23:4-15, PROVERBS 8.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—377, 937, 269.**

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